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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 003296

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SUBJECT: SWEDISH ENGAGEMENT WITH IRAQ INCREASING; SWEDISH TRADE MINISTER TO VISIT

REF: (A) BAGHDAD 2174 (B) STOCKHOLM 482 (C) BAGHDAD 1852

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Sweden has made a large commitment to Iraq and intends to do more, particularly as it looks ahead to its July 2009 European Union (EU) Presidency. In an October 8 meeting, visiting Swedish Ambassador Niclas Trouve and Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Deputy Director General Robert Rydberg told Ambassador Crocker and General Odierno that Swedish Trade Minister BJORLING planned to visit Iraq in about a month and Foreign Minister Bildt may come some time after. Trouve sought the Ambassador's and Commanding General's (CG) assessments of Iraq's current political and security situation, and underlined Sweden's commitment to contribute to Iraq's future. On the standing up of a permanent Swedish Embassy by spring 2009, Trouve said all is still on schedule but expressed concern about the imminent removal of immunities for private security contractors. He delivered a letter from the Swedish MFA officially requesting and enumerating specific security assistance from the U.S., floated the idea that the U.S. should pay for alterations to the perimeter walls of the Swedish Embassy site as a solution to the issue of Wartsila generator convoys, and said that Sweden is still waiting for an answer to its July request for information on a Swedish detainee at Camp Cropper. Trouve noted that he will travel to Washington and New York in December. End Summary.

Swedish Engagement Influential and Appreciated

¶2. (C) Deputy Director General Rydberg began by underlining Sweden's significant investment in Iraq. It hosted the May International Compact with Iraq (ICI) review conference and has begun construction on its new embassy in Baghdad, the biggest Swedish embassy project since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Ambassador Crocker stressed that Sweden's engagement, and particularly that of Foreign Minister Bildt, has been enormously important in catalyzing wider European involvement. The May ICI meeting sent a powerful signal throughout Europe. Ambassador Crocker said that Foreign Minister Zebari has told him visits by the German, Italian and Slovakian Foreign Ministers are in process. Rydberg noted that Swedish Trade Minister BJORLING is planning to visit Iraq next month. Swedish Foreign Minister Bildt will come sometime after. Ambassador Crocker encouraged Sweden to use the visit of Trade Minister BJORLING to press home the message that Iraq must take steps to improve its business climate. Currently Iraq is rated 152nd in the world as a place to do business by the World Bank's 2009 "Doing Business" Report. He recommended BJORLING engage Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh on this, given his key role both in Baghdad and in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on business matters.

¶3. (C) Turning more broadly to the critical role Sweden can

play in strengthening Iraq's international relations, Ambassador Crocker said that Sweden - as a neutral country that represents the values of the West - is in a tremendously influential position. We are at an historic moment: since the 1958 revolution, Iraq has been a major source of regional and global instability. Now, for the first time in 50 years, it has a government that is oriented toward the West. The West must take advantage of this moment as there are countervailing forces that have other designs. Sweden's voice has influence in the EU and at UN Headquarters.

Ambassador Crocker also stressed the need for the international financial institutions (IFIs) to step forward, a message he told Ambassador Trouve he has delivered in Washington. The International Monetary Fund needs to staff an office here and the World Bank needs to expand its presence in order to build the lasting relationships that will be critical over the longer term.

Security and the SOFA

¶4. (C) Ambassador Trouve then solicited the Ambassador's and CG's assessment of the current political and security situation as well as prospects for successful conclusion of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). His particular interest was on how they would impact Swedish Embassy operations. Trouve asked specifically about timetables for a U.S. withdrawal and confirmation that immunities for private security contractors would no longer exist after the end of the year. On the ongoing SOFA negotiations, Ambassador Crocker said we are close, but a few hard issues remain. The

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U.S., he said, is cognizant of the potent effect the British colonial legacy still has on the Iraqi psyche and the need for any agreement to sanctify Iraq's full sovereignty. At the same time, he stated, we have some core concerns that need to be met. In the end, we must have a legal basis for our forces to remain.

¶5. (C) General Odierno provided an overall security assessment, noting that, with the exception of Nineva province, steady improvements continue countrywide. While these gains are still fragile, the recent spate of high-profile bombings in Baghdad notwithstanding, the overall number of attacks has not risen in past weeks. AQI has been pushed to the north and its ability to conduct operations elsewhere has been greatly diminished. Similarly, operations this year against Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) Special Groups has led them to adjust tactics, focusing more on small, well-trained teams that target primarily mid-level GOI officials. General Odierno said that Iran is supporting these teams and is also using "soft power" tools to influence Iraq's political situation. In response to a question by Ambassador Trouve on Sons of Iraq (SOI) integration, General Odierno assessed it as going well thus far. Prime Minister Maliki's directives to the Iraqi military indicate he wants it to succeed. That said, the U.S. is monitoring the situation closely.

Iraq's Multidimensional Politics

¶6. (C) On the political front, Ambassador Crocker and General Odierno updated Trouve and Rydberg on dynamics within the Sunni and Shia communities, Arab-Kurdish tensions, and the impact of PM Maliki's growing assertiveness. On the Sunnis, Ambassador Crocker said that the Sahwa movements do constitute a political force. How that will play out is not yet certain. A number of groups with the Sahwa name have registered as political parties in order to take part in the upcoming provincial elections. While this is a positive sign, the Ambassador noted, it is also potentially problematic as their experience in political organizing is nonexistent. We are looking at how best to keep their

expectations realistic. What we don't want, he stressed, is for these groups to go into the provincial council elections poorly organized and overconfident, then not succeed and spend the next several years again in the political wilderness. Hopefully we will see local alliances emerge between Sahwas and the established Sunni political parties. If handled properly, the upcoming elections should redress the imbalances that resulted from the 2005 Sunni boycott.

¶17. (C) Turning to the Shia, Ambassador Crocker noted recent efforts by Prime Minister Maliki to reach out to the Sadrists. It is still an open question whether he is doing this in his capacity as Prime Minister of Iraq or as the Dawa Party leader with an eye to elections. Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) is also reaching out to the Sadrists and the Sadrists themselves have become increasingly vocal in their criticism of Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs. As an example, Ambassador Crocker pointed to this past week's incident when Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mashadani's plane was denied entry into Iranian airspace enroute to Tehran for official meetings. Sadrist parliamentary member (and chair of the parliament's Legal Committee) Baha al-Arraji publicly denounced this Iranian action as "an insult to a pillar of Iraq's democracy." (Note: Mashadani eventually did go to Tehran. End Note.) Many Sadrists recognize that the JAM did not work out as planned and are now prepared to transform their energies into political and social efforts.

¶18. (C) On recent Kurdish-Arab tensions on Kirkuk, Khanaqin, and Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs), Ambassador Trouve asked what role the U.S. is playing to resolve these issues. On Khanaqin, General Odierno responded that our commanders in the field have emphasized to both sides that the last thing they need is for this to result in armed conflict -- we must make sure that a tactical mistake does not lead to strategic consequences. In reality, General Odierno observed, the real problem has been the inflammatory comments of Barzani and Maliki, but it appears now that the situation has now been defused and cooler heads have prevailed.

¶19. (C) Ambassador Crocker noted that this issue offers great insight into the multidimensional aspect of Iraqi politics. First, although not in KRG territory, the Peshmerga moved into Khanaqin several years ago to provide security when the central government was incapable of doing so. At that time, the primarily Kurdish population of Khanaqin welcomed their presence. Now, however, the broader context has changed. The position of the central government is much stronger and Maliki wants to redress the situation.

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Second, the improved security situation has resulted in both Sunnis and Shia increasingly identifying themselves as Arabs over their sectarian affiliation. This strengthened sense of "Arabness" has produced a newly emerging Sunni-Shia alliance against the Kurds, as was shown in the July parliamentary vote on a provincial elections law (which was then vetoed by the Presidency Council). Third, and to some degree a countervailing force to the Sunni/Shia versus Kurd dynamic, there is the tension between Maliki's efforts to strengthen central government authority and resistance to that from Kurds, and some Sunnis and Shia in the provinces. Ambassador Crocker underlined that all these currents are the result of a demonstrably improved security situation.

Turkey/PKK

¶10. (C) The discussion touched briefly on the recent Kurdistan Workers, Party (PKK) attack on Turkish soldiers very close to Turkey-Iraq border. Ambassador Crocker told Ambassador Trouve that it is critical for Iraqi Kurds to understand how explosive this issue is with the Turkish population. He noted that both Talabani and Barzani immediately condemned the attack. General Odierno added that

this is a complex issue that does not have a military solution. The GOT, he noted, understands this but is under tremendous public pressure to do something. In reality, the steps the GOI will need to take are both multifaceted in nature and will take perhaps five to seven years, which does not mesh up well with the Turks desire to see the PKK eliminated now.

Swedish Embassy Update, Future of Private Security Contractors, and Wartsila Generator Convoys

¶11. (C) Ambassador Trouve then turned to concrete issues related to progress on Sweden's embassy project. The plan to open the embassy in April 2009 is on track, he said. The architects in charge have told him all is going well. The security perimeter is in place and a security force is present. The Swedes continue to use the security services of the UK-based Control Risks Group (including Gurkha stationary guards at the embassy building site). Ambassador Trouve said he proposed to Foreign Minister Zebari that security personnel on Swedish Embassy grounds, and those protecting him when he travels, should be covered under the Vienna Convention. He expressed concern, however, about what would happen should a Swedish security officer shoot someone. He also noted that providing diplomatic passports for these individuals would be problematic, given that most are not Swedish. Ambassador Crocker noted that the U.S. Embassy has already initiated a dialogue with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior about training special Iraqi protection units that eventually will provide protection for U.S. diplomatic personnel. Ambassador Crocker emphasized that as we move forward, security responsibilities have to be "Iraqi-ized."

¶12. (C) Ambassador Trouve then raised the ongoing issue (refs B and C) of the convoys of huge Wartsila generators that must pass by the Swedish Embassy site and have necessitated temporary movement of exterior T-walls. (Note: The moving of the T-walls takes place entirely on the public road that passes directly in front of the Swedish Embassy and which the GOI has never acknowledged to be part of the Swedish compound. The Swedes are using this public road as their construction laydown area and are doing so unilaterally, according to the Iraqi MFA. End Note.) Trouve confirmed that the last two convoys went smoothly but also said "we're not happy about this." The situation has created the impression that the Swedes are allowing military convoys to pass through their premises. Additionally, the moving of T-walls reduces the setback from the street and makes the embassy site more vulnerable to VBIEDs. Trouve asked how many more Wartsila convoys were expected and General Odierno responded that two more are scheduled. Ambassador Crocker noted that whether there will be future convoys beyond this is a GOI decision and urged the Swedes to engage the Ministry of Electricity regarding its future intentions. Ambassador Trouve then informally conveyed that the architects of the project say that an alteration in the positioning of the T-walls can be accommodated into their design. However, it would cost \$75,000 to \$100,000. Trouve floated the idea that "maybe this is something we can discuss." Ambassador Crocker again recommended that Trouve raise this with the GOI.

Formal Request for Security Assistance

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¶13. (C) Following up on conversations earlier this year with both Ambassador Crocker and DCM Butenis (refs A and C), Ambassador Trouve presented a formal letter from the Swedish MFA requesting U.S. Embassy assistance for Swedish embassy personnel in the event of emergency situations. The letter requests assistance in four specific areas: Quick Reaction Force (QRF); emergency communications and

intelligence/information exchange; MEDEVAC and access to the Combat Support Hospital (CSH); and hostage assistance. Trouve said that once the U.S. formally responds to this request it will designate a point of contact with whom we should liaise.

Swedish Camp Cropper Detainee; Information Again Requested

¶14. (C) In a brief aside, Ambassador Trouve noted that the U.S. had not yet responded to an official letter Sweden had delivered in July regarding the situation of a Swedish detainee at Camp Cropper. "We need an answer," he said.

Trouve to Washington and New York in December

¶15. (C) As the meeting concluded, Ambassador Trouve said he will be traveling to Washington and New York in December. Ambassador Crocker asked that he provide us his specific dates when he knows them, as there would be a number of USG officials who would be very interested in meeting with him.
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